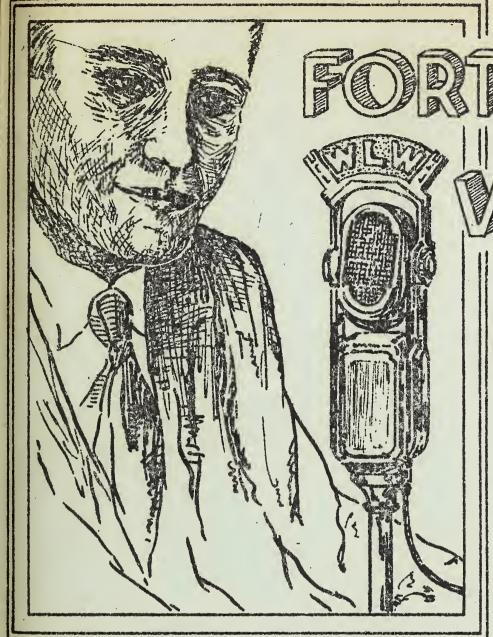
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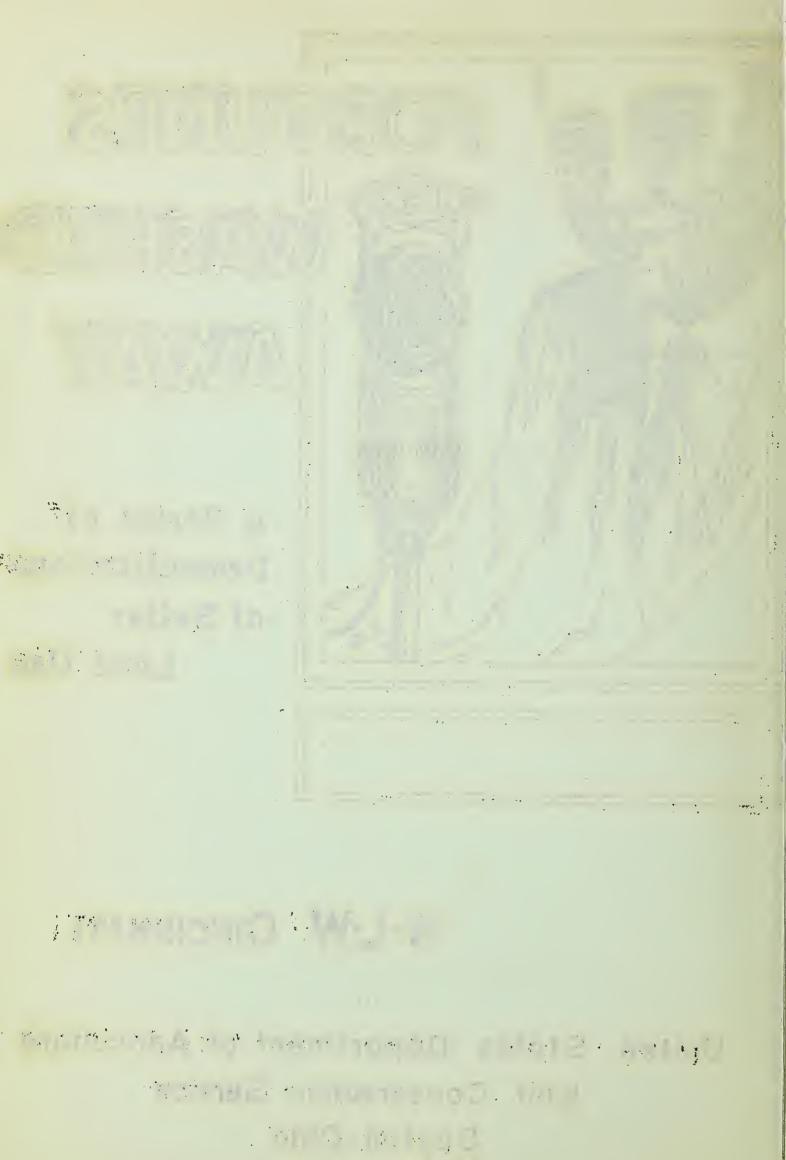
WASHED AWARA

A Series of
Dramatizations
of Better
Land Use

No. 146 February 8, 1941 1:15 p.m.
"FATHER WAS A SOIL BUILDER"

W.L.W CINCINNATI

United States Department of Agriculture
Soil Conservation Service
Dayton · Ohio



SOUND: Whistling wind...

VOICE

3lack blizzards across the plains.

SOUND OFF MIKE: Woman coughing...

SECOND VOICE

Biting wind!

DEEP VOICE

Choking dust.

SOUND: Up wind, set fire...

VOICE

Havoc...

SECOND VOICE

Destruction ...

DEEP VOICE

Waste...

SOUND: Up wind, kill fire, set flood...

VOICE

Floods rushing down the great valleys.

VOICES IN UNISON

Floods, drowning, killing, wasting...

SOUND: Up wind...

DEEP VOICE

The wealth of America washing and blowing away -- soil erosion!

SOUND: Clap of thunder...

ANNOUNCER

Father Was a Soil Builder: the 146th consecutive episode of

Fortunes Washed Away!

ORGAN THEME: DEEP RIVER.

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#### ANNOUNCER .

When the Cherokee Indians were driven away from the Atlantic seaboard, they moved to Indian Territory, now the eastern slice of the state of Oklahoma. Prominent in early days was Sequoyah, who gave the Cherokees their alphabet, first written language of the five civilized tribes, Chickasaws, Choctaws, Cherokees, Creeks, Seminoles. Prominent, too, was Sequoyah County, land of streams and hills and woods and rocks, land of rain and land of sunshine, land of James Angus McDonald. James Angus McDonald wasn't a Cherokee, though...he came into the territory later. But let his son, Angus McDonald, tell the story. His father was....(FADE)

#### NARRATOR

My father was an Oklahoma preacher. He was also a fanatic -- on soil conservation. He was always telling his neighbors how they should plow their crops, and they were always laughing at him. He had funny ideas about the way to plow in dry weather, about hillside plowing, about building dams in the gullies and draws, and about conserving the soil in other ways. I remember the first year we moved there...1912, it was. There was a hot battle going on between Taft and Wilson, then...but of course I didn't know that. But I sure remember what that grand old man said to me. We were out in the fields, and....(FADE)

## FATHER

There it is, my boy...probably the poorest and hilliest farm in Eastern Oklahoma. We might call it the rock and air farm... that's all she is, rocks and air.

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#### ANGUS

It's not all that way, father. Over there on that side it's almost level.

## FATHER

I know, but it's been farmed a long time, and the soil is might near yellow. That shows you what sheet wash will do.

#### ANGUS

Sheet wash?

#### FATHER

Yes, washing away the soil a little at a time. You'll learn as you grow up, Angus. You'll learn that you can have soil wash even though you don't have gullies. But I hope you'll learn more -- that you can keep the soil from washing. That's what I aim to do here.

## ANGUS (NOT COMPREHENDING)

I guess so. But the oats are good, father.

## FATHER

No, my boy. We have a good stand, but the dry spell is getting it. I'm not disappointed. I didn't expect much of a crop. The land has got to be built up. This is a dry year, son...we won't do much, except prepare for the future...(FADE)...

## NARRATOR (FADING IN)

....and the old man was right, it was a dry year, the driest summer I remember. The drouth stunted the oats, and it made the ground so hard you couldn't stick a plow in it. It had just enough clay to harden it like cement. (LAUGHING) We had a hired hand named Charley working for us, and did he hate hard work!

One time we were out in that old oat field, and....

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## CHARLEY (GRUMBLING)

He should of knowed better. I told him. I told him.

## ANGUS

Told who, Charley?

## CHARLEY

Your paw.

## ANGUS

Told him what, Charley?

## CHARLEY

I told him we'd better wait 'til it rains. I said we can't plow this ground. And he only says, "we'll break that land, and when it does rain, it'll soak up the water and store the moisture." He says, "the main thing is to get your land in condition for the rain." Hmmmf:

## ANGUS

But I'm helping you. I got out the other turning plow, and I aim to help you break the eight acres.

## CHARLEY

Lot of help you'll be! But come on.

## ANGUS

Why won't I help?

## CHARLEY

Lissen, Angus, this here land is hard. You can't cut a very wide slice because the team can't pull the plow. Sometimes the plow will jump out of the ground and you have to stand it on its point to get it back in. Let me show you. Gittap there!

# SCUND: Clanking of harness....

## CHARLEY

Why, you, onery....gittap there...git.....whoa.

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## SOUND: Stop clanking harness...

#### CHARLEY

You see?

FATHER (fading in)

I wondered where that other turning plow went. See what, Charley?

## CHARLEY

Mister McDonald, I'm gonna quit. Right now.

#### ANGUS

I've heard that a lot of times, Charley.

CHARLEY (STALLING)

Well....this time I mean it.

#### FATHER

Do you?

#### CHARLEY

Yes, I do. If you weren't so stubborn yourself, you wouldn't work so hard. You preach the same ideas -- that everybody ought to work all the time. I honestly believe you think the Lord wants us all to work all the time.

## FATHER

When there's work to be done, Charley, we work. Go on with it.

I'll take this plow, Angus...you fetch the water.

## CHARLEY

I don't feel well.

## FATHER

I noticed that.

## ANGUS

So did I. Mother said you wasn't feeling well because you only ate nine biscuits for breakfast.

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## FATHER

Come on, Charley.

## SOUND: Harness clinking....

## CHARLEY (fading off)

Oh, blast the day I was born...git up there! You blanketey....
NARRATOR (fading in)

A few days later there came a gully washer, I mean a real one. What you might call a toad-strangler. Just about the middle of the afternoon a couple came to get married, and we couldn't find the old man anywhere. Mother sent me out to look for him -- with my coat and overshoes. She was mighty particular that way.

## SOUND: Heavy rain behind....

#### NARRATOR

The rain was coming down in sheets and the water was running everywhere. I noticed on the way to the field that one of the ditches the old man had dug was nearly full of water. Then I saw my father. The old man was standing by the fence that divided his land from Cassidy's....

## SOUND: Rain down slightly...

## FATHER (shouting)

Come here! I want to show you something. Look at that water coming off Cassidy's land!

## SOUND: Rain up...

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#### NARRATOR

His field had about the same slope as ours. It had corn on it, and the rows ran up and down hill. Between the rows there were little streams of water. You could see them all the way up the hill when the lightning flashed. Down below, where they joined to form a brook, they cut across and washed out the whole row. The old man explained it all to me...

## SOUND: Rain almost out...

#### FATHER

It's letting up now, son...but the water is still ripping the land to pieces.

#### ANGUS

I see . . . . but, father . . . you're getting soaked .

## FATHER (IGNORING HIM)

Let's follow the water.

## SOUND: Boots slushing thru mud...

#### ANGUS

Why, this gully's getting bigger all the time.

## FATHER

Come on.

## ANGUS

It's hard walking, and besides...mother said to tell you that....

## FATHER

Now, you'll notice here, that the land has begun to flatten out.

The gully is getting shallow...

## ANGUS

It's almost gone! Gee, that's fine!

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#### FATHER

Yes, water is spreading all over this flat place...my one flat field. Tomorrow, if this keeps up, they'll be a layer of sand and clay. You're seeing poor land being made poorer, and good land being runned. But look back at our fields, and you'll see the gullies controlled by small dams, so the water soaks in.

Now look at Cassidy's. Son, these improvident farmers are ruining the land. Yes, ruining it world without end. The whole country is going to rack and ruin. There will come a time when conservation will be popular but it will be too late. When the farmers are pauperized, the nation will face ruin. (PAUSE)

#### NARRATOR

Father kept building up his land, but Cassidy kept letting his go to pot. The old man showed Cassidy over our farm. He showed him the fields where the rows ran on the contour, and he showed him the rock wall where the wash had filled in until our land was a foot and a half higher than Cassidy's. He pointed out....

(FADE)

## FATHER

Look at that land.

#### CASSIDY

I'm looking at it.

## FATHER

Four years ago you said it wasn't worth cultivating. I got a good crop of oats off it, and the peas will be ready to pick in a few weeks. We'll pick the peas, and make hay out of the vines.

And look at those dams in the gullies.

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#### CASSIDY

Brother Mac, you build more dams than anybody I know of. But I ain't got time to be hauling so much rock. You see that gully?

Yes, I see it, and I see also some of the soil it washed down onto my land.

#### CASSIDY

Why, it would take a thousand loads of rock to fill it up. I ain't stout. I can't be lifting them big rocks, anyway.

#### FATHER

It wouldn't take a thousand loads of rock. Let's see. I'd put about eight dams in that deepest gully. Take about a wagonload to each dam. I'll tell you what I'll do. If you'll put in those dams I'll furnish you a hand to help you lift the big rocks.

## CASSIDY

Yeah?

## FATHER (GETTING ENTHUSIASTIC)

Then you could put a ditch here by the fence to take care of the surplus water. You could build little dams in the small gullies, and run your rows on the contour...and then by changing your crops....

## CASSIDY (SPITTING)

Brother Mac, your idees are good, but not for the likes of me.

I'm rather poorly with my asthmy, and I have to raise cotton. I
got to have money to raise a crop and live on.

## FATHER

But at least, you can run your rows with the lay of the land, and not up and down hill!

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#### CASSIDY

Ain't got time.

## FATHER (EXASPERATED)

Why, you...why, you....I'm a minister of the Lord. But...you stupid fool!!

## NARRATOR

You see, Cassidy kept raising corn and cotton, running his rows up and down hill. The crops weren't much good, though, and we didn't get any good out of the debris that came down on our best land. More and more, the old man walked down to the lower side and looked at Cassidy's land. Once I heard him mutter something about the foundation of civilization being undermined. Then he turned to me and said...(FADE)

## FATHER

Son, we'll buy this ten acres. We need more land anyway.

## ANGUS

But this land is poor and thin. And besides, Cassidy is so contrary he probably won't sell it.

FATHER (WITH DETERMINATION)

He'll sell it.

## NARRATOR

The next day Cassidy came over to borrow a hame-string and he got to talking about his land and crops. I remembered the old man's look the day before, and I knew that he would have that land, because when he once made up his mind about something, he never changed it. Well, Cassidy was talking, and...(FADE)

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#### CASSIDY

My land ain't good like yours, Brother Mac. It washes so bad.

And my crops is so poor. That last rain washed out a lot of cotton on the north side of my field.

## FATHER

You're right. Your land is awful sorry. Some of it isn't worth paying taxes on. It'd pay you to let that north ten go back for taxes.

#### CASSIDY

Oh, I wouldn't do that. I wouldn't let it go for taxes. I might sell it, though.

## FATHER (LAUGHING)

Who'd buy it?

## CASSIDY

Why don't you buy it, Brother Mac? You said the other day you needed more land.

## FATHER

I need some good land. Well, we've got to get back to the field and finish pulling fodder. My daddy always saved his fodder. It's fine for horses in hot weather. A good bundle of fodder will keep a horse from getting the thumps in hot weather. Giddap...

## SOUND: Harness clinking, horses snorting....

## CASSIDY

But wait.....PAUSE AND OUT.

we will be a second

#### NARRATOR

My father plowed his corn a month after the neighbors had laid theirs by. Corn, he would say, has an extensive root system. It needs lots of moisture. So, when he plowed for corn, he turned his land deep and made a good seedbed -- so it would hold the moisture longer. He worked hard, too...and people would say that he went to a lot of trouble. One day he was tying fodder when Cassidy came up to the barn...

## SOUND: Rattling cornstalks...

## CASSIDY (fading in)

Brother Mac, you shore do like work. Why, you can get hay a lot easier than that.

#### FATHER

Cassidy, I heard you had been buying some hay. I never bought a bale of hay and I never expect to.

## CASSIDY

Seems like my medder didn't turn out so good on account of the drouth. Brother Mac, if you hear of anybody that wants to buy that land let me know. I'd sell cheap.

## FATHER

Any price would be high for that land. Come on, boys...it's burning daylight. We've got to get that fodder pulled before night.

ORGAN: SHARP NOTE.

## CASSIDY

But, Brother Mac!

ORGAN: SHARP NOTE.

## CASSIDY

But, Brother Mac!

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ORGAN: SOFT NOTE.

#### FATHER

Well, boys ... I just bought the Cassidy ten.

#### NARRATOR

The old man was a hard worker, and we all pitched in on the Cassidy land. Thickets along the gully, getting out the black-berry bushes and second-growth stuff. Build dams. Plow on the contour. Build ditches. We had hired hands, by then, and they didn't seem to pay much attention to his lectures. But he would say, as he would "hist" his foot on the wagon hub....

#### FATHER

The Scotch have contributed a great deal to conservation of the soil. There is no doubt in my mind that Thomas Jefferson got a lot of his ideas from them. That's natural that they should conserve, because they had a poor country, and they were foremost in everything else.

## NARRATOR

Well, my father would preach, and he would set Bermuda grass in the pastures. He would build stock ponds, and lanes -- with good, stout hog-wire and barb-wire. His barns were overflowing, his cattle were the fattest, his horses were the best-trained; the farm was a well-ordered little universe; our hill farm became known as the best in the county. And my father would say, as he walked along in the moist loamy dirt in the furrow....

## FATHER

Look at that rich dirt turning over. Isn't that fine? Look at that rich brown dirt that I'm turning. I tell you, this is the only life.

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#### NARRATOR

Even as he began to get on in years, he didn't forget...he kept giving orders....orders, orders....not orders, no....directions... like a man who loved this land of ours....

## FATHER (softly)

Build those dams. Direct the hands. Get Bermuda in those gullies. (CHUCKLING SOFTLY) Grass'll heal 'em.

## SOUND: Car coming to halt...

## FATHER

What's this?

#### ANGUS

The ambulance, father.

#### FATHER

Oh, yes, the ambulance! Looks like I'm going toward the green pastures.

## ANGUS (softly)

No, father ... no father .

## FATHER

Don't make any fuss over me. These cars -- why, half the farmers cars aren't paid for. Look at these farms. Half the window lights out, the fences down, and not a cow or a chicken or a pig on the place -- but a car sitting in the yard. (SIGHS).

## ANGUS

You must rest, father.

## FATHER

Rest. Yes, I must rest. I'm an old man. I'm done.

## ANGUS

No, father, you're not done.

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ORGAN: DELIRIOUS MUSIC BEHIND.

#### FATHER

I've never been beaten! -- never been beaten.

#### ANGUS

Father!

#### FATHER

I will build dams again. This will stop the wash. Why don't you set out Bermuda -- and then let a gully washer come!

ORGAN: UP AND OUT.

#### NARRATOR

He died in a few days in his sleep. The nurse who held his hand said that his pulse beat strongly up to the last. The funeral service was held in the old church where he had once been the pastor. The minister told what a good man he was, and how many souls he had saved. He didn't mention the soil he had saved.

But my father was a soil builder.

ORGAN THEME: DEEP RIVER.

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